

REMARKS

A. Background

Claims 14-21, 23-28, 30, 31, 38-47, 49-51, and 55-63 were pending in the application at the time of the Office Action with claims 16, 17, 25, 41, 44, 49, and 51 being withdrawn from consideration. The Office Action rejected claims 14, 15, 18-21, 23, 24, and 55-58 as being anticipated by cited art. Claims 57 and 63 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claims 26-28, 30, 31, 38-40, 42, 43, 45-47, 50, and 59-62 were allowed. By this response Applicant has amended claims 14 and 55 and cancelled claim 57. As such, claims 14-21, 23-28, 30, 31, 38-47, 49-51, 55, 56, and 58-63 are presented for the Examiner's consideration in light of the following remarks with claims 16, 17, 25, 41, 44, 49, and 51 being withdrawn from consideration.

B. Proposed Claim Amendments

Applicant has herein amended claim 14 to recite that the stem is "permanently fixed to the bearing plate." Claim 55 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 57. Applicant respectfully submits that the amendments to the claims do not add new matter and entry of the amendments is respectfully requested.

C. Rejection on the Merits

Initially, applicant would like to thank the examiner for the courtesy of the telephone interview conducted in May 3, 2006 wherein it was discussed why claim 14 distinguishes over USPN 5,019,103 to Van Zile, USPN 6,102,954 to Albrektsson, and US Patent Publication 2004/0106928 to Ek. The arguments presented were substantially the same as those discussed in the response to the prior Office Action. During the interview, the Examiner agreed that if claim 14 was

amended to recite that the stem is “permanently fixed” to the bearing plate that this limitation would distinguish claim 14 over the Van Zile, Albrektsson, and Ek references. The Examiner, however, stated that he would need to conduct a supplemental search before allowing the application. As such, this response is being filed concurrently with a request for continued examination (RCE).

Pages 2 of the Office Action rejects claims 14, 18-20, 55, 56, and 58 under 35 US C § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,019,103 to Van Zile et al. Page 3 of the Office Action rejects claims 14, 21 and 23-24 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,102,954 to Albrektsson et al. Finally, page 3 of the Office Action also rejects claims 14 and 15 under 35 US C § 102(e) as being anticipated by US Patent Publication 2004/0106928 to Ek. For substantially the same reasons as discussed in the response to the prior Office Action, applicant submits that none of the Van Zile, Albrektsson, or Ek references disclose or suggest “the stem being permanently fixed to the bearing plate,” as recited in claim 14. As discussed above, this position was agreed to by the Examiner in the prior telephone conference. As such, applicant submits that claim 14 is not anticipated by the cited prior art. Applicant has herein deleted the language, “the bearing plate and the stem comprising a unitary member that is fabricated from a single piece of material” from claim 14 in that this language was attempting to cover substantially the same the limitation that is now addressed by “the stem being permanently fixed to the bearing plate.”

Claims 15, 18-21, and 23-24 depend from claim 14 and thus incorporate the limitations thereof. As such, applicant submits that each of these dependent claims is also distinguished over the cited art for at least the same reasons as discussed above with regard to claim 14. As such, withdrawal of the anticipation rejection of claims 15, 18-21, and 23-24 is respectfully requested.

Page 4 of the Office Action objects to claims 57 and 63 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but states that the claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 57 depends from claim 55. Applicant has herein amended claim 55 to incorporate the limitations of claim 57. As such, applicant submits that claim 55 is allowable for at least the same reasons that claim 57 was considered allowable in the Office Action.

Claims 56 and 58 depend from claim 55 and thus incorporate the limitations thereof. As such, applicant submits that each of these dependent claims is also distinguished over the cited art for at least the same reasons as discussed above with regard to claim 55. As such, withdrawal of the anticipation rejection of claims 55, 56, and 58 is respectfully requested.

No other objections or rejections are set forth in the Office Action.

D. Conclusion

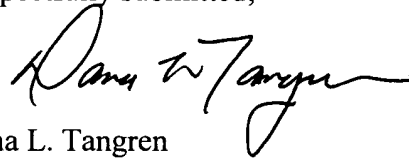
Applicant notes that this response does not discuss every reason why the claims of the present application are distinguished over the cited art. Most notably, applicant submits that many if not all of the dependent claims are independently distinguishable over the cited art. Applicant has merely submitted those arguments which it considers sufficient to clearly distinguish the claims over the cited art.

In view of the foregoing, applicant respectfully requests the Examiner's reconsideration and allowance of claims 14-21, 23-28, 30, 31, 38-47, 49-51, 55, 56, and 58-63 as amended and presented herein.

In the event there remains any impediment to allowance of the claims which could be clarified in a telephonic interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to initiate such an interview with the undersigned.

Dated this 14th day of August 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dana L. Tangren', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dana L. Tangren
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 37,246
Customer No. 022913
Telephone No. 801.533.9800

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